

Toronto Housing Charter – Opportunity for All

Policy Statement:

Adequate housing is a fundamental human right that is recognized in international law, including the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which Canada is a party. All orders of government, including municipalities, have a role to play in furthering the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing that is affirmed in international law.

It is the policy of the City of Toronto to recognize that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities. The City of Toronto supports improved housing outcomes for its residents. Its Policy is to move deliberately to further the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Toronto Housing Charter is consistent with the federal Housing Policy Declaration adopted as part of the *National Housing Strategy Act* S.C. 2019, c. 29 s. 313.

The Act came into force on July 9, 2019, and states that it is the housing policy of the Government of Canada to recognize that adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law and that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities. The Act received Royal Assent on June 21, 2019 and recognized that housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law.

In this regard, the City adopts a human rights based approach to housing that is rooted in the following principles:

- All residents have a right to a safe, secure, affordable home in which they can live in peace and dignity and realize their full potential.
- All residents have a right to housing that is maintained in a state of good repair.
- All residents have a right to housing that is accessible and takes into account the specific needs of historically disadvantaged and marginalized groups.
- All residents have a right to housing that respects and takes into account their expression of cultural identity and way of life.
- All residents have a right to a home that is part of a complete community with equitable access to a range of opportunities to live, work, learn, and play.
- Regardless of whether they rent or own a home, or are homeless, all residents have an equal stake and voice in Toronto's future and to effective participation in decisions and policies affecting their communities and their housing.
- All residents have a right to equal treatment with respect to housing, without discrimination contrary to the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and to protection against arbitrary requirements that result in discrimination based on membership in groups protected by the Code or on homelessness or housing status.



Implementation:

The Toronto Housing Charter – Opportunity for All is designed to guide City Council and the City’s public service in its decision-making, resource allocation, policy development, and in the provision of services and programs.

The City of Toronto will:

1. Develop and maintain a housing strategy to further the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing, through all appropriate means, including creating and maintaining affordable housing, planning, zoning, licensing, regulation, enforcement, taxation and other measures within its authority. The strategy will focus on the full spectrum of housing need, with an emphasis on those persons most in need of adequate housing and will include measurable goals and timelines and a plan to reduce and ultimately end homelessness.
2. Require that any future City decisions, policies, services and programs that impact housing are screened and assessed for impact on the Toronto Housing Charter and revise them, as appropriate, to ensure that the City’s Policy as stated in the Toronto Housing Charter is achieved and not negatively impacted.
3. Ensure necessary co-ordination and collaboration among relevant City Divisions to achieve the City’s Policy as stated in the Toronto Housing Charter.
4. Take action to prevent arbitrary eviction, homelessness and other threats to human security and dignity, ensuring that City policies and programs are designed to avoid residents from being made homeless.
5. Continue to take appropriate measures to preserve existing affordable housing and facilitate the creation of additional affordable housing.
6. Review the establishment of a Housing Commissioner of Toronto to provide independent monitoring of the City’s progress in meeting the goals of the City’s housing strategy and in furthering the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as recognized in international law including compliance with the Toronto Housing Charter.

7. Review the City's policies, programs and by-laws to evaluate those which penalize or criminalize homeless people or that displace them from where they are living without offering appropriate services and housing options and report to Council regarding amendments as appropriate.
8. Provide for participation by members of affected communities in decision-making related to housing, including by persons with lived experience of homelessness or of precarious or inadequate housing.
9. Allocate the maximum available resources within the City's means and jurisdiction, and according to the City's unique circumstances, to support the Toronto Housing Charter.
10. Provide opportunities for organizations and affected communities to advance a human-rights based approach to housing and participate in decisions that affect it.
11. Provide regular, public reports on its plans, actions, targets, and progress in relation to the housing strategy and making homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring, and ensure that these reports are available to all residents and other stakeholders in appropriate and accessible formats.
12. Consult and work with human rights bodies including the Federal Housing Advocate and the Ontario Human Rights Commission to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing of residents and to advance the policies as stated in the Toronto Housing Charter.
13. Work collaboratively with other orders of government to identify respective areas of responsibility and shared obligations to further the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as affirmed in international law.

The City of Toronto will from time to time review the Toronto Housing Charter to reflect any amendments to complementary policies.

